



Math homework is due tomorrow— how can I help?

Homework causes trouble in many households. Relax—remember whose homework it is! Think of yourself as more of a guide than a teacher. Don't take over for your child. Doing that only encourages him or her to give up easily or to ask for help when a problem becomes difficult.

The best thing you can do is ask questions. Then listen to what your child says. Often, simply explaining something out loud can help your child figure out the problem. Encourage your child to show all work, complete with written descriptions of all thinking processes. This record will give your child something to look back on, either to review or to fix a mistake, and can also help the teacher understand how the problem was solved.

Asking the following kinds of questions can help you and your child tackle the challenges of math homework:

- What is the problem that you're working on?
- Are there instructions or directions? What do they say?
- Are there words in the directions or the problem that you do not understand?
- Where do you think you should begin?
- Is there anything that you already know that can help you work through the problem?
- What have you done so far?
- Can you find help in your textbook or notes?
- Do you have other problems like this one? Can we look at one of those together?
- Can you draw a picture or make a diagram to show how you solved a problem like this one?
- What is your teacher asking you to do? Can you explain it to me?
- Can you tell me where you are stuck?
- Is there someone you can call to get help? Can you discuss the problem with a classmate?



- Would using a calculator help you solve the problem?
- Would it help to go on to another problem and come back to this one later?
- Is there a homework hotline at your school? What is the phone number for it?
- Why don't we look for some help on the Internet?
- If you do only part of a problem, will the teacher give you some credit?
- Can you go in before or after school for help from the teacher?

Remember, support homework—don't do it!

Besides supporting your child on homework, show the importance of learning math by helping your child connect math with daily life. Point out your own activities that involve mathematics, such as deciding if you have enough money to buy items on a shopping list, estimating how long it will take to make a trip, determining how much carpet or wallpaper to buy for a room, or developing a schedule to complete a series of tasks. Talking about these everyday situations will give you a chance to increase your child's appreciation for the usefulness of math!